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THE CATHOLIC
Educational Exhibit
IN THE
COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION.

BY

RT. REV. J. L. SPALDING, D. D.,

BISHOP OF PEORIA, ILLINOIS.

HEADQUARTERS:

DE LA SALLE INSTITUTE,

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All who think at all in our day, find their thoughts turn to the subject of education; for all men now understand that right education offers the best means to give being and life to our human ideals; since all efforts to develop, strengthen and perfect character are educational. The school, of course, is but one, though a most important one, of the agencies by which education is given. Its influence is constantly widening, and the tendency seems to be to have it supersede both the family and the church in the work of moulding men and women.

"Whatever we wish to see introduced into the life of a nation," says William von Humboldt, "must first be introduced into its schools." Now, what Catholics wish to see introduced into the national life, first of all is true religious faith and practice. Religion is God's presence in the soul, it is the revelation of life's goodness; it is the fountain of hope and joy; it is the impulse to a noble activity in which we are conscious that failure itself means success. In happy days, it is light and perfume; and when the waters of life are bitter it draws them heavenward, and again they are sweet. Through it the sense of duty—duty to ourselves, to others and to God—is awakened; and the caring for duty is the vital principle in the creation of character. Hence to introduce true religious faith and practice into the national life is to introduce that which is more important than material prosperity or intellectual activity; for religion is not merely the manifestation of our kinship with God, of the divine and imperishable nature of the soul; it is the only air in which mortality thrives, in which virtue becomes fervent, and goodness kindles with beauty's glow. Conduct rests upon a firm basis only when we believe in the infinite and godlike nature of the good; in a universe of moral ends in which the right is also for ever the best.

No school, therefore, is good which attempts to educate the body, or the mind, or the conscience without the aid of religion, for man is not a patchwork of parts, but a something whole and organic, which springs from God, and which can be developed into harmonious completeness only through vital union with the Author and End of its being.

Hence the church does not and cannot consent to the exclusion of religion from any educational process. As we live and move and have our being in God, the moral and intellectual atmosphere we breathe should be fragrant with the aroma of religious faith; and the inspiration to goodness and duty, which comes chiefly in early years, and is imparted with most power by a voice made persuasive by an open and enlightened mind, should be received in the schoolroom as well as in the home and in the house of worship. To forbid the teacher who holds the child's attention during those years when aspiration is purest, when conscience speaks most clearly, when reverence is most natural, when belief in the heroic and godlike is most spontaneous, to appeal to his pupil's religious nature, and thereby to strive to awaken in them a keener sense of the divine, a more living consciousness of the sacredness and worth of life, is to repress in him precisely that form of activity which is most salutary and most helpful from an educational point of view. What is education worth if the spiritual side of our nature be permitted to lie dormant? if the sense of modesty and purity, of single-mindedness and reverence, of faithfulness and diligence, of obedience and love, be not called forth? What kind of education can be given by the teacher who may not speak of the evil of sin, of the harm wrought by vanity, jealousy, envy, cowardice, hatred, and vulgarity of thought and word? If he be forbidden to enter the inner life of man, how shall his soul ever be brought into contact with the souls of his pupils? He becomes a machine, and his living personality, in which consists his power to educate, is condemned to inaction.

When our common-school system was finally organized as exclusively secular, nothing was left for Catholics to do but to build and maintain schools of their own, in which the will, the heart, and the conscience, as well as the intellect, should be educated. If Catholic children have a right to a Catholic education it follows that the duty devolves upon Catholics to provide the means whereby it may be received; and the Catholics of the United States have accepted the task thus imposed with a spirit of generous self-sacrifice which is above all praise. They have built three thousand and five hundred parochial schools, in which seven hundred thousand Catholic children now receive a Christian education.

They have also established and maintained a large number of universities, seminaries, colleges, academies, reformatories, and asylums, in which religious influence is made to interpenetrate all the processes of nurture and training. The development of this Catholic educational system is carried on from year to year with increasing zeal and energy. The beginnings were difficult; progress is now comparatively easy. What has been done shows us not only what we have still to do, but gives confidence that we shall be able to do it. The people take an interest in the work not less earnest than that of the bishops and priests, while the teaching orders make almost superhuman efforts to meet the ever-growing demands for their services. The indispensable need of religious schools, which thirty or forty years ago was proclaimed by but a few, is now conceded by all Catholics. The utterances of Pius IX. and Leo XIII. on this subject have no uncertain sound; and the bishops of the Catholic world, in pastorals and in councils, have raised their voices, in unison with that of the visible head of the church, to proclaim the vital importance, whether from a religious or a social point of view, of thoroughly Christian schools. They declare that a purely secular education is a bad education, that if our civilization is to remain Christian our schools must recognize the principles of Christianity. In the third Baltimore Council, held in 1884, the zeal of the American hierarchy in the cause of Catholic education glowed with greater warmth than in any previous assemblage of our bishops. The eighty prelates gathered in this national council decree that a parochial school shall exist close to every Catholic church, and that no ordinary difficulties shall be considered as an excuse for its non-existence. A pastor's serious neglect to build a school is declared to be a sufficient cause for his removal; and they affirm that it is a bishop's duty to provide schools which shall be Catholic, not in name alone, but which shall be thoroughly efficient. As a means to this end, they would have the pastor consider himself the principal of his school. He should watch over it and make it the object of his special care and devotion. To equip priests more fully for this office, the bishops urge that a course of pedagogics be made part of the curriculum of theological seminaries. Can we make our schools as good as the best of the public schools? Can we make them even better?

"Can we do this?" asks Bishop Hennessy, of Dubuque, and he answers: "If I had a voice that would resound from New York to San Francisco, with that voice I would say—We can!" He adds: "The parochial school as it should be, and as it will be, will not only guard the faith of the children and transfigure the church of God,

but it will prove to be the most potent factor at our service for the conversion of our beloved country." Those who know with what earnestness and zeal the Catholic body of the United States is enlisted in the cause of Catholic education, will readily understand why the American bishops have determined to have a "Catholic Educational Exhibit" in the "World's Columbian Exposition."

Our school system is an organic part of our ecclesiastical constitution. It rests upon principles as wide as human nature, as immortal as Truth. We cannot if we would, we would not if we could, recede from the stand we have taken. We hold that the common-school system is radically defective, though we have no disposition to interfere with those to whom it commends itself. We concede to others, as we demand for ourselves, religious and educational freedom. Our convictions on this point are unalterable; and since here there is question of vital, temporal and eternal interests, there can be no compromise which conflicts with the principle of religious education.

The Catholic Church is irrevocably committed to the doctrine that education is essentially religious, that purely secular schools give instruction but do not properly educate. The commemoration of the discovery of America, by holding an Exposition which will attract the attention and awaken the interest of the entire world, offers an opportunity such as we cannot hope to have again in our day, or in that of our children, to give public evidence of the work we are doing. In the four hundred years which have flown by since the stars of heaven first saw reflected from these shores the white man's face, beside his white sail, there has been no such occasion for such an advertisement, and when the fifth centenary shall be here there will be no need, we may confidently trust, of special efforts to commend and uphold the cause of religious education. Catholics assuredly have a right to a prominent place in this great celebration. Juan Perez, Isabella and Columbus, to whose lofty views and generous courage the discovery of America is chiefly due, were not only devout Catholics, but they were upheld and strengthened in their great undertaking by religious zeal and enthusiasm. Their faith was an essential element in the success of their enterprise. There should be no desire to ignore or obscure this fact, even on the part of the foes of the church, and it is a duty which Catholics owe to the honor of the name they bear to see that the part which their religion played in opening to the Christian nations a new hemisphere, thereby extending and quickening the forces of civilization through the whole world, shall not be misunderstood or passed over in silence at this time, when the eyes of all men turn to America to

behold the marvels which have been wrought here by strong hearts and awakened minds.

To this end the Catholic Educational Exhibit, if rightly made, cannot but contribute; and since it will be the only distinctively Catholic feature in the Columbian Exposition, every honorable motive should impel us to leave nothing undone to make it worthy of the event commemorated and of our own zeal in the cause of Christian Education. We shall thus place before the eyes of the millions who will visit the Exposition a clear demonstration of the great work the Church in the United States is doing to develop a civilization which is in great part the outgrowth of religious principles, and which depends for its continued existence upon the morality which religious faith alone can make strong and enduring. There can be little doubt that many are opposed to the Catholic school system from the fact that they have never given serious attention to the principles upon which it rests, or to the ends which it aims to reach. It is the fashion to praise education, and hence all declare themselves favorable to it; but those who love it enough to make it a matter of thoughtful and persevering meditation are, like the lovers of Truth, but few. But those who do not read seriously, or think deeply, may be got to open their eyes and look, and what they see may arouse interest and lead to investigation. Opinion rules the world, and the Catholic Exhibit offers a means to help mould opinion on the subject of education, which in importance is second to no other; and in an age in which the tendency is to take the school from the control of the church, to place it under that of the state in such a way as to weaken its religious character, nothing which may assist in directing opinion to true views upon this subject may be neglected by those who believe that education is essentially religious.

The exhibit will help also to enlighten and stimulate teachers, by diffusing among them a more real and practical knowledge of the various educational methods and appliances. It will arouse a new interest in pedagogics as a science and an art. We may easily become victims of the fallacy that a school is Catholic because this adjective is affixed to its name, or because in it prayers are said and catechism is taught. A poor school cannot exert a wholesome influence of any kind. Idle, inattentive, listless, and unpunctual children will not become religious, however much they are made to pray and recite catechism. In a truly religious character self-respect, truthfulness, a love of thoroughness and excellence, a disinterested ambition, are as important as a devotional spirit. Where the natural virtues are lacking, the supernatural have no proper soil

in which to grow. A right school system does not necessarily make a good school.

An educational exhibit will help to impress these and similar truths more vividly upon the minds of educators; it will enable a very large number of Catholics to take a general survey of the educational work which the church in the United States is doing, of which most of us have but a very inadequate knowledge; it will bring into juxtaposition the methods and systems of the various Teaching Orders, and will make it possible for all to adopt whatever may be found excellent in any of them. There will, of course, be no unworthy rivalry, no thought of advertising this or that institution or teaching order. The aim is to advance the cause of Catholic education. We care little where or by whom good work is done; it is enough to know that it is done. In certain instances a bishop will prefer to make a separate exhibit of the work done in his diocese, because he believes that in this way the end will be attained more effectually. From a similar motive the Teaching Orders may choose to make collective exhibits of their work; and institutions of learning which stand alone and have an individuality of their own, will avail themselves of this opportunity to offer evidence of the kind of education they give. All our institutions of learning, from the university to the kindergarten, come within the scope of this display of educational work.

The third Plenary Council emphasizes the urgent need of a wider and more thorough training of the priesthood, and it is believed that the theological seminaries will make an exhibit which will be interesting and at the same time a valuable evidence of the progress we are making in fitting our priests for the special and arduous tasks which this age of unsettled opinions and weak moral convictions imposes upon them. It is not rash to hope that the Catholic Educational Exhibit will awaken new zeal, arouse a more generous spirit of sacrifice, inspire a deeper enthusiasm, in the cause of Christian education, which is the cause of our country and our religion.

The suggestion has been made that this exhibit will offer a favorable opportunity to hold a congress of Catholic teachers. The good results to be expected from such a meeting are numerous and manifest. Those who have paid any attention to the workings of the associations, whether county, state or national, of the public school teachers, are aware of the stimulating and illuminating effects which their discussions and deliberations produce. It is desirable that our Catholic educators should be brought together, that they should learn to know and appreciate one

another, that they should enlighten and correct one another by a comparison of opinions and experiences. This, and much else, could be done in an educational congress. A regret is often expressed at the absence of lay action in Catholic affairs. Education is precisely the field in which Catholic laymen can most readily and most effectively bring their zeal and knowledge to bear upon the living issues and interests of the church. They build and maintain our schools, and there is no good reason why they should not take an active part in stimulating them to higher efficiency. A certain number of our teachers are of the laity, and their relative proportion will doubtless increase. One need not be a Brother or a Sister to be at the head of even the best of Catholic schools. Why should not the intelligent laymen or women of a parish be invited to visit the school and to examine the pupils? Their presence would have a good influence upon the children, and their knowledge of the school would enable them to counteract the apathy or opposition of indifferent and foolish parents.

Finally, it is not probable that the Catholic Educational Exhibit and the Congress of Catholic Teachers will lead to the founding of a Catholic Educational Magazine? Catholic newspapers we have—too many of them possibly. Catholic reviews and magazines we also have; but we have no periodical of any significance devoted to the cause of Catholic education. The establishing of a periodical of this kind, with competent editors, would certainly be a safe venture from a financial point of view. We have nearly four thousand schools, and the heads of a very large number of them, at least, would take such a magazine, and among its subscribers would be found all the priests who are really interested in education. As an advertising medium it would have special advantages. The directors of the Catholic University, at Washington, have decided not to have a general review of their own, but might they not consent to edit a purely educational magazine? Or if they do not see their way to this, might not the heads of the University of Georgetown or of Notre Dame be induced to undertake the work? What more interesting subject is there than education? It is a question of life, of religion of country; it is a question of science and art; it is a question of politics, of progress, of civilization; it is a question even of commerce, of production, of wealth. What could be more instructive than a series of articles on the history of education, on the great teachers and educational reformers, on pedagogics as a science and as an art; on educational methods; on the bearing of psychology upon questions of education; on hygiene in

its relations to the health of teachers and pupils; on the educational values of the various branches of knowledge; on personal influence as a factor in education; on the best means of forming a true religious character?

An educational magazine would become the organ of the great and growing system of Catholic schools. In its pages the practical and speculative questions which are constantly suggesting themselves to teachers would be discussed, and thus the body of Catholic educators would be brought into active, intelligent communion with one another. At all events, to whatever practical results and undertakings the Educational Exhibit may lead, there can be no doubt that its influence will be for good. The bishops and Catholic educators have already shown their great interest and earnestness in the work, and as the time for holding the Exposition draws nearer an increasing enthusiasm in the success of the enterprise will manifest itself. The general expenses of the manager and his secretaries will be borne by the prelates; but it is well to call the attention of all true friends of Catholic education to the fact that the more money we have, the more creditable and effective will the Exhibit be made, and we confidently believe that an appeal to the priests and Catholic laymen of the United States will place in the hands of those who have control of the enterprise a sufficient sum to make the Catholic Educational Exhibit in the World's Columbian Exposition a memorable event in the history of religious education.

J. L. Spalding.

Peoria, Ill.

BIRDSEYE VIEW WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION.